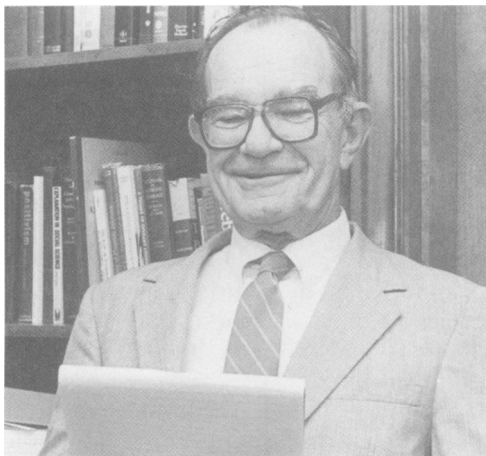


In Memoriam

Joel Greenspoon (1920–2004)

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After a long battle with leukemia, Joel Greenspoon died on April 20, 2004, in Denton, Texas. He was born October 11, 1920, in Charles Town, West Virginia.

Joel earned his bachelor's degree at the University of Virginia in 1941. He coached at Fishburne Military Academy in Virginia in 1941–1942 and then served in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1946. After some course work at Harvard, in 1947 he earned a master's degree in psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and went to Indiana University (IU) that year, where B. F. Skinner, William Verplanck, and J. R. Kantor were faculty members. He earned his PhD in clinical psychology in 1952. Fellow IU graduate student and friend Ed Hovorka says that Joel took many more courses than neces-

sary; "he wanted to learn about everything." He also loved to converse long into the evening. Hovorka relates that at the end of more than one hours-long discussion, Joel put on his coat to leave. But something fellow graduate student Jody Hovorka, or Ed, said, prompted Joel to take off his coat and resume the discussion: "Joel loved to talk."

Thus, it is perhaps not coincidental that Joel was interested in studying verbal behavior. His famous study published in 1955 in the *American Journal of Psychology* ("The Reinforcing Effect of Two Spoken Sounds on the Frequency of Two Responses") demonstrated that principles of operant conditioning applied to our talk, which could be experimentally analyzed. This study has been widely cited over many years and is included in Jerry Willis and Donna Giles' 1976 book *Great Experiments in Behavior Modification* (Hackett Publishing). Among other things, Joel's work indicated that non-directive therapy may in fact not be nondirective, in that the nondirective therapist emits a verbal response to some of the client's verbalizations.

Joel taught for 49 years and never tired of it. He taught at Pomona College in California and also did research at the U.S. Navy Electronics Laboratory in San Diego and at Aerojet General, also in California. A fellow former IU graduate student, Paul R. Fuller, was in charge of a PhD clinical psychology program at Florida State University. He asked Joel to come there to lead the program, and Joel "built it well." From Florida State Joel went to Arizona State University (the

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department there was then known as "Fort Skinner in the Desert"). He next served as department chair and then acting dean at Colorado's Temple Buell College. Then he served as department chair during his 1st year at the University of Texas–Permian Basin (UTPB). He was lured to the University of North Carolina (UNC)–Charlotte to be department chair and returned to UTPB after 2 years. After retiring from UTPB, Joel went to the Department of Behavior Analysis at the University of North Texas as a research faculty member, where he also continued to teach.

Throughout his career Joel devoted a great deal of time and attention to teaching. Many former students and colleagues wrote to thank him for his great influence on their careers. He also continued to research. The chapters on neurological and physiochemical variables in his 1976 book *The Sources of Behavior: Abnormal and Normal* (Brooks/Cole) anticipated the current interest in "the inside story." Consistent with Joel's interest in teaching, he published articles about it in J. Gilmour Sherman's 1974 book *Personalized System of Instruction: 41 Germinal Papers* (W. A. Benjamin), in my 1991 *Behavioral Analysis of Societies and Cultural Practices* (Hemisphere), and with Richard Rakos and me in *The Behavior Analyst*. And consistent with his clinical interests he contributed a chapter, "Compliance, Health Service, and Behavior Analysis," to my 1997 *Cultural Contingencies: Behavior Analytic Perspectives on Cultural Practices* (Praeger). Joel also served on clinical psychology licensing boards in Texas. At UTPB he established a Center for Behavioral Analysis, which was supported by his clinical practice, for which he took no remuneration. There were many expressions of gratitude for his clinical work.

Joel's arrival at UNC–Charlotte in 1974 started a conversation between us that continued for 30 years. He spoke truth to power, a behavior assiduously

avoided by all but a very small percentage of faculty. Joel was not afraid of asking questions of, and raising issues with, his interlocutors, in spite of knowing that often they much preferred to avoid such discussions. And as a champion of scientific empiricism and high academic standards, he often encountered strong opposition. A few years after Joel returned to UTPB in 1976, I spent a semester there at the Center for Behavioral Analysis, where I ran rats in an interpolated continuous reinforcement experiment we conducted. I also sat in on some of Joel's sessions with clients.

Unwilling to unquestioningly accept behavior-analytic orthodoxy, Joel questioned and probed the assumptions and principles of the field. Over the years he became concerned that behavior analysis had evolved into a quasireligion, intolerant of those who questioned any of the fundamental beliefs manifested in the behavior-analytic program. In his view there was, for example, too frequently a resort to the fallacy of argument from authority; for example, Skinner (or some other behavior-analytic luminary) says x , so x must be true, because that authority said it.

Joel and I found that the most reinforcing aspect of attending the conventions of the Association for Behavior Analysis and the American Psychological Association was the informal discussions with people we did not get to see the rest of the year. When he was no longer able to attend conventions, he and I started talking on the phone almost every week. We invariably discussed behavior analysis and social, political, and public policy issues. Paul R. Fuller has written that Joel "was not only a best friend, he was a role model and an inspiration in strength and persistence." Indeed. Joel had a lifelong love of learning, was interested in sports, and enjoyed reading mysteries, gardening, and visiting with his grandchildren. He was a very hard worker who ignored his own fatigue, and a

kind and unselfish mentor, teacher, parent, husband, and friend.

Conventions throughout the country, Friday afternoons during a semester at UTPB, walking in the Cotswolds, weekly phone conversations. Most of the details will fade, but the effects of

strong positive reinforcement will linger always.

Joel Greenspoon is survived by his wife of 49 years, Alice, of Denton, Texas, son Michael of Houston, and daughters Linda of Dallas and Susan of Richmond, Virginia.